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Illinois
Environmental
Protection Agency

Office of Public Information
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for a Safer Home

The disposal of household hazardous waste is a growing problem in many Illinois households throughout the state. The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency defines hazardous waste as corrosive, ignitable, reactive or toxic. This definition pertains to products used in the kitchen, bathroom, garage, workshop, garden and also on the lawn.

This pamphlet deals with the precautions of household hazardous waste and the alternatives citizens can use to reduce or eliminate the use and disposal of this type of hazardous waste found in nearly every household.

AEROSOLS

Aerosol sprays are hazardous because of the active ingredients they contain and the possibility of explosion they present. The propellants may also be hazardous to the lungs when inhaled. Use pump-spray or other nonaerosol versions of cleaning and grooming products such as liquid, paste or powder oven cleaners and cream, stick or roll-on deodorants.

AIR FRESHENERS AND DEODORIZERS

Air fresheners do not really "freshen" the air but instead they deaden the sense of smell or counteract one odor with another. Open a window, use an exhaust fan or do both. Sprinkle baking soda in odor producing areas or set vinegar out in an open dish. Place an open box of baking soda in the refrigerator to absorb food odors.

CARPET AND RUG CLEANERS

Mix 1/2 cup mild liquid dishwashing detergent with 1 pint boiling water and let cool. With an electric mixer whip the paste into a stiff foam. Apply it to the carpet with a damp sponge and rub gently. Work into 4 x 4 sections. Wipe off the suds with a clean cloth. To rinse, add 1 cup of white vinegar to 1 gallon of lukewarm water. Rinse each section and wipe the carpet as you go. Change the

rinse solution frequently. Clean the carpet on a dry sunny day with the windows open to speed drying. Do not soak the carpet; it may mildew. Test any shampoo first on an inconspicuous area to insure that no discoloration will occur.

CERAMIC TILE CLEANERS

Pour 1/4 cup baking soda, 1/2 cup white vinegar and 1 cup ammonia into a bucket. Add 1 gallon warm water and stir until baking soda dissolves. This solution can also be used as a general multi-purpose cleaner.

DISINFECTANTS AND GERMICIDES

Wash items in soap and water. Washing in Borax or sodium carbonate (washing soda) and water will also work.

DRAIN CLEANERS

If you use a commercial drain opener that fails to work, you will be left with a drain clogged with a highly caustic compound. Prevent clogging by covering drains with a screen to keep out grease, food scraps and hair. To loosen blockage, mix 1 cup each of baking soda and salt and 1 cup of white vinegar and pour down drain. Wait 15 minutes. Flush drain thoroughly with boiling water. Use a rubber plunger or plumber's snake if drain is seriously clogged.

FLOOR WAX STRIPPERS

People who are sensitive to fumes and odors have been known to suffer from headaches or other discomfort after being exposed to fresh floor wax. To polish linoleum and vinyl floors without commercial wax, mix 1 part thick boiled starch with 1 part soap suds. Rub the mixture on the floor and polish dry with a clean, soft, dry cloth. To remove old wax, pour a small amount of club soda on a section of the floor. Scrub well, let soak for a few minutes, then wipe clean.

FURNITURE POLISH

Use olive oil, lemon oil, beeswax or a mixture of beeswax and olive oil. A mixture of 2 teaspoons lemon oil and 1 pint mineral oil in a spray bottle will also work.

MOTHBALLS

Place cedar chips or sprigs of dried tansy around clothes or store clothes in cedar chest.

OVEN CLEANER

Aerosol oven cleaners are among the worst contributors to indoor air pollution. People with asthma, chronic bronchitis, and other respiratory problems are particularly susceptible to the fumes of strong oven cleaners. No matter how thoroughly you try to rinse these cleaners, a residue remains that emits additional fumes the minute you heat the oven again. Wipe away grease and spills after preparing each meal. Wipe away charred spills with a nonmetallic bristle brush. To remove baked-on grease and spills scrub with baking soda. Do not let the baking soda touch wires or heating elements. Scour racks and burner inserts with steel wool.

SILVER CLEANERS

Pour water into an aluminum or an enameled pan with aluminum foil covering the bottom. Fill with enough water to cover the silver (2-3 inches). Add 1 teaspoon baking soda and 1 teaspoon salt and boil for 3 minutes. Remove silver, wash in soapy water and polish dry. Do not use for silver jewelry or flatware with hollow handles.

SPOT REMOVERS

Taking care of spots immediately with nontoxic compounds avoids a trip to the dry cleaners. Commercial dry cleaning agents may cause light-headedness, dizziness and other central nervous system symptoms. For butter, coffee, gravy or chocolate stains, immediately sponge up or scrape

off as much of the stain as possible. Dab with a damp cloth of 1 teaspoon white vinegar and 1 quart cold water solution or put paper towels underneath the blot and apply a solution of equal parts ammonia and water. If an ammonia stain remains, blot it with a solution of table salt in water.

TOILET BOWL CLEANERS

Pour 1/2 cup liquid chlorine bleach into the toilet bowl. Let stand for at least 30 minutes. Scrub with long-handled brush and flush.

WINDOW CLEANERS

Measure 3 tablespoons ammonia, 1 tablespoon white vinegar and 3/4 cup water into a clean spray bottle. Use a solution of 2 tablespoons vinegar and 1 quart water.

CAUTION: NEVER MIX PRODUCTS CONTAINING AMMONIA WITH CHLORINE BLEACH, TOILET BOWL CLEANERS, RUST REMOVERS OR OVEN CLEANERS. THESE PRODUCTS WILL PRODUCE POISONOUS GASES WHEN COMBINED!

HOME WORKSHOP PRODUCTS

PAINT STRIPPERS, GLUES AND ADHESIVES, TURPENTINE, VARNISH, LACQUERS AND AUTO BODY REPAIR COMPOUNDS


Solvents used in furniture refinishing can cause headaches, drowsiness, blurred vision, impaired motor response and chemical intoxication. Paint solvents are of particular concern to people with heart conditions and to those who wear contact lenses. Methanol and certain other solvent compounds can stress the heart. Contact lenses absorb strong vapors holding contacts against the eyes causing irritation or eye damage.

Use these products outdoors or in a very large room with a steady current of dry, not humid, air. Ventilate well by opening all windows and doors.

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Use a large exhaust fan to blow fumes out. Wear a paper filter dust mask when grinding or sanding. Use a dust attachment on power tools. Clean up dust and filings with a vacuum cleaner instead of a broom. Do not soak brushes in solvents. Clean them immediately and soak them in plain water or soap and water. Always wear protective goggles, gloves and a work apron. Separate the work area from the living space as much as possible.

LAWN PRODUCTS

All commercial chemical sprays can be toxic to people under certain circumstances. If you still decide to use chemical pest and weed control products, dispose of leftovers properly to lessen the impact on the air and water supply.

Spray plants with less toxic compounds. For example, spray with a soap and water solution of 3 tablespoons of soap per gallon of water for aphids, mealybugs, mites and whiteflies. Spray with pyrethrum, a product of a type of chrysanthemum, to control caterpillars, beetles, aphids, mites, leafhoppers, thrips, moths and dozens of other fruit and vegetable pests.

Store all insecticides and herbicides under lock and key to prevent accidental poisoning in children. Introduce other predatory bugs, such as soldier bugs, ladybugs, damsel bugs, pirate bugs, spiders, lacewings and gall midges to control unwanted pests. Use bacterial pesticides, such as *Bacillus popilliae* for Japanese beetles and *B. thuringiensis* for many types of insect larvae.

Interplant with pest repellent plants: marigolds, coriander, thyme, yarrow, rue and tansy. Indoors dispose of garbage to avoid attracting ants. Use flypaper and flyswatters. For household insect spray, grind or blend 1 garlic clove and 1 onion. Add 1 tablespoon cayenne pepper and 1 quart water. Mix well. Let steep 1 hour. Add 1 tablespoon liquid soap.

FLEAS

To control fleas on dogs and cats, bathe animals every two to four weeks with pet shampoos containing insect repellent herbs such as rosemary, rue, eucalyptus and citronella.

TERMITES

Ask exterminator to use organophosphates, such as chlorpyrifos (Dursban T.C., by Dow).

For more information please contact:

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
Office of Public Information
2200 Churchill Road
P.O. Box 19276
Springfield, Il 62794-9276
217-782-5562

In case of accidental poisoning contact the poison center in one of the Illinois regions listed below.

For central and southern Illinois:

Central and Southern Regional
Poison Resource Center at St. John's Hospital
in Springfield..... 1-800-252-2022
If calling from Sangamon county.....753-3330

For central and northern Illinois:

Regional Poison Resource Center
for Central and Northern Illinois
at Pekin Memorial Hospital
in Pekin..... 1-800-322-5330



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For Chicago and northeastern Illinois:

Chicago and Northeastern Illinois Regional
Poison Control Center at Rush Presbyterian -
St. Luke's Hospital in Chicago.....1-800-942-5969

*Information was provided and reviewed by the
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